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VI.—*Some Notes on Ellis's Early English Pronunciation.\**

By CHARLES ASTOR BRISTED

One volume of this book was noticed in the *North American Review* rather more than a year ago, since which time two of the remaining three volumes have appeared.

Our first feeling in connection with the work is one of excusable national pride. It is, partially at least, a publication of the Chaucer Society, and one of the principal supports of the Chaucer Society is Professor Child of Harvard, who had already so well merited of the republic of letters by bringing about the Percy Reprint. And it is gratifying to find our countryman's deserts so freely and gratefully acknowledged in England. The current report of the Chaucer Society says: "The active help of Professor F. J. Child, of Harvard, has been continued; to him we owe nearly all our fresh members. The enlightenment of the managers of public libraries in the United States contrasts favorably with the disregard of our work by the librarians, or rather library-committees of Great Britain and Ireland. The society has twenty public libraries subscribing to it in the United States, against eight in England, one in Ireland, and none in Scotland."

I think we ought to rejoice in these things and to give them full prominence without being deterred by any bugbear of mutual admiration or self-praise. The American philologist has an up-hill task. He is much less encouraged by both the general public and individuals than the professors of the positive and mechanical sciences are. He finds fewer like-minded men. He needs all the support he can get.

On the very first page of the first chapter of Mr. Ellis's

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\* *On Early English Pronunciation, with especial reference to Shakspere and Chaucer, containing an investigation of the correspondence of writing with speech in England, from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present day, preceded by a systematic notation of all spoken sounds by means of the ordinary printing type. Including a re-arrangement of Professor F. J. Child's Memoirs on the Language of Chaucer and Gower, and reprints of the rare tracts by Salesbury on English, 1547, and Welsh, 1567, and by Barclay on French, 1521. By ALEXANDER J. ELLIS, F. R. S., F. S. A., Fellow of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, formerly Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge, B. A. 1837, &c., &c., &c.*

book we find a statement which deserves wide circulation, as it helps to correct some erroneous ideas which have lately come into vogue. "We speak," says Mr. E., "of the 'dead' languages of Greece and Rome, unconscious that our own English of a few years back has become as dead to us." This is perfectly true, and true in a wider sense than our author uses it, because he had only occasion, for his purpose, to employ it with reference to pronunciation and idiom. We have often heard it asserted within a few years, and especially by what I may call the phonetic interest, that the difference not merely between present and early English, but between the former and Anglo-Saxon, is almost entirely and solely a difference of orthography. Of which popular error I hardly think it necessary to go into a deliberate and detailed confutation before this body. No one with even a moderate knowledge of the subject, having before his eyes *Havelok the Dane* and King Henry III.'s Proclamation (to go no further back than the 13th century), could seriously and honestly maintain such a proposition.

But before examining the body of the work we must carefully scrutinize the introduction, containing the *palaeotype*, the author's system of notation and literation for scientific purposes.

It is called *palaeotype* because the old (Roman) types are used in it, without accents or diacritical marks, though some of the letters are turned or reversed. The elements called letters (though some of them are combinations of as many as five letters) reach the high number of 270, besides which there are nearly fifty tonic signs, used as suffixes. These elements are intended to express *all known sounds*, not only in the Indo-Germanic but also in the Asiatic and African languages.

While giving due praise to the remarkable industry and learning displayed in this system, we cannot avoid regarding it as somewhat cumbrous and overdone. The letters and combinations are not in all cases happily chosen. *Q* for our *ng* has an odd and repulsive effect and *c* for the Spanish *d* (which is either *d* or *dh* flat, or *th* sharp, according to position, and

certainly needed no separate sign,) may very well mislead. But the most puzzling is the *æ* diphthong. Mr. Ellis uses this, so far as I can make him out,\* to express the shortest or very nearly the shortest possible *a*, something shorter than any ordinary continental form of the letter, and doubles it (*ææ*) to express a prolongation of this sound, not so long or full as the alpha† in words like *car*. Now, in spite of its occurrence as an Anglo-Saxon alpha, the diphthong *æ* is apt to be associated in our minds with the sounds of (English) *ā* and *ē*, rather than with any modification of alpha. (Thirty years ago, some of the professors and tutors of Yale College, and probably of some other New England colleges, did most barbarously shorten this diphthong where it occurred in Latin antepenults, but they made it *ě* not *ǣ*.) Mr. Ellis's use of *æ* has confused in one place the writer of the notice in the *North American*, who takes his double diphthong for (English) *ā*; and I once thought it had deceived Mr. Ellis himself, in writing palaeo-typically the Scotch word *plaid*, till I found afterward that he really supposed the word to be pronounced *pladd*—a singular slip for one of his dialectic knowledge and experience.‡

But these are trifles; the main objection is to the whole theory of the scheme, which is like an attempt to exhaust the inexhaustible. Take, as the first case, the varieties of alpha from the shortest and thinnest (say English *ǣ*) to the longest and broadest (say German *ā*) which passes gradually into (English) *au*. Between *ǣ* and *au* a delicate musical ear might detect an almost infinite number of shades, especially when the modifying power of following consonants is taken into account.§ Mr. Ellis himself says, that “if we descended into

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\* He gives as illustration *man, cat, sad*. But the vowel of *cat* is surely not the alpha of *man*; it is rather the first syllable of *manners*.

† I use alpha as a convenient term throughout for the continental or non-English power of *a*.

‡ See Scott's rhymes, *laid, plaid, maid*. On a subsequent re-reading of the book, the conviction has been forced upon me, that Mr. Ellis is sometimes confused by his own notation and that he has brought together under his *æ, ææ*, sounds as different as ordinary English *ǣ* and *ā*.

§ *R*, according as more or less strongly sounded, has a marked effect on a preceding vowel. Most of us are familiar with the Irish pronunciation of *horse*. Many, perhaps most persons would express this in English letters by *harse*; it is

every minute shade of spoken sound, the variety would be so interminable that all definite character would be lost" (ch. i, p. 19), but if he does not grasp at these interminable varieties, he strives to admit as many of them as possible, and in particular to make out for each language its own distinct set of vowel sounds, thus increasing (as it seems to me) the already sufficiently great difficulty of acquiring foreign tongues.\*

My own idea, I confess, is the reverse of this. In the interest of practical philology, I always try to bring together as many sounds of different languages as I can, making small account of the inadequate and often erroneous rules given in grammars and dictionaries. We may often find an equivalent which, though perhaps not scientifically accurate, is sufficient for practical purposes. Thus our own *ě* may not strictly cor-

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generally thus printed by those who undertake to represent the Irish *patois*. Others might compare it to the proper name *Horace* with the *a* elided, and might write it *hor'ce* or *horrse*, which last is the combination I should adopt to explain it to a foreigner who understood English. But many persons, as I have said, hear the vowel as *ă*. The Bath pronunciation mentioned by Mr. Ellis seems akin to the Irish. He was asked for a piece of *card* as he supposed, when the applicant really wanted a *cord*. It is to be regretted that he does not state whether the people of Bath pronounce the *r* more strongly than Englishmen generally; if they do, it explains the modification of the vowel. Last winter a lady who is an excellent linguist was reading or declaiming French verse to a small circle. I noticed that she gave a peculiar sound to *e* before *r*, e. g. instead of *perdu* she said *pardu*, or something so near *pardu* that I could not express it otherwise either in speech or writing. When her attention was called to the peculiarity (of which she was of course unaware), she suggested what appeared to be the true reason of it, namely, that in endeavoring to avoid the common Anglo-Saxon fault of not sounding the continental *r* fully, she laid a little extra stress on it, and thus modified the preceding vowel. On the other hand, the suppression of *r* also modifies the vowel before it. *Vide* New England *gal* and *gaal* for girl, and young-New-York *fĕst* for *first*. My German gardener calls horses, *hässes*. These are cases of the vowel's being thinned. In other well-known instances, the labialization or complete elision of the *r* broadens it.

\* In the distinction, elsewhere noticed, which Mr. Ellis so often and strongly insists on, between our *we* and the French *oui*, our *î* and *ou* and the continental *ai* and *au*, he has no lack of support; nevertheless I cannot agree with him as to the amount, importance, and nature of the differences. It seems to me that the diphthongal sounds are the same, that is, have the same elements; but we pronounce them more quickly and compactly, it being in accordance with the genius of our language to compress and condense diphthongs.

respond to the French *é* and its general equivalent *ai* diphthong; but it is so near that we may consider it an equivalent. Our numeral *ten* does not absolutely reproduce the name of the distinguished French critic, but it is so near that no Frenchman would misapprehend it, and by adopting this pronunciation we avoid the common Anglo-Saxon error of calling him *Tane*, a sound which one of his countrymen might possibly misunderstand. The name of the French poet and novelist who died a few years ago, may not be exactly our word *merry* with the accent reversed, but it is very nearly so, and by calling it *mer-ry'* we avoid the danger of pronouncing it like our proper noun *Mary* with the accent reversed.

But Mr. Ellis's minute subdivision is not confined to the vowels. He has an odd theory of labialized letters and every initial consonant followed by the digamma sound he considers a distinct sound, not merely *q*, but *dw*, *fw*, *pw*, *rw*, &c. The writer of the notice in the *North American* has expressed his dissent from this conceit, but a word or two more may be said of it. Most of these new elements are formed by taking to pieces the French diphthong *oi* (Eng. *waa* or *waw*), in what I must call a most arbitrary manner. Take *roi* for instance: what ground is there for connecting the digammatic sound with the initial consonant? None whatever. It belongs to the following vowel. Take away the initial *r*, and you still have the sound *waw*, as in *oie* or the first syllable of *oiseau*. Take away the *i* or the *o*, and replace the *r* as in *roseau*, *risible*, and what becomes of the digamma? Mr. Ellis makes out a great difference between our *we* and the French *oui*, which I consider altogether imaginary, so far as the hearer is concerned, which is the main point. For here, to parody the Eastern *mot*, "the speaker is one and the hearer is another," though we cannot continue the quotation and say, in all cases, that "there is no harm done."\* Mr. Ellis's view is what I should call too subjective. He is guided by the manner in which the sound is formed, the position of the

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\* I once saw an Englishman's pronunciation of *oui* expressed in French comic writing by *ui*. But this must have been a mistake, the French diphthong *ui* being one of the most difficult sounds to an Anglo-Saxon.

vocal organs. But what practically concerns the philologist in such cases is the effect rather than the cause. The German or the Charleston *w* may be formed by a position of the organs different from that which produces the ordinary *v*. I can only say that it sounds to me and to most persons like *v*, and I do not see the good of calling or writing it *bh*.

Apart from these general objections, I think special exceptions should be taken to two particular points in the literature, namely the notation of *i* and *ow*, and of *ch*. The first element of the diphthongal sign *i*, and the diphthong *ow* (or *ou*) he expresses by a turned *e*; but what sound he intends is doubtful. In the equivalent within brackets he makes it *ǎ* or a slight modification of *ǎ*, to which there is no particular objection; but the example which he gives is the indistinct short vowel of *but*; and he illustrates a modification of the sound by the French *e* (muet) and *eu*. What analogy, not to say identity, is there between these indistinct sounds, (which we may roughly call *ũ*) and *ǎ*? It may be remarked here that Mr. Ellis, with what I consider his usual superfluity of distinction, finds two if not three different vowel sounds in the pronoun *I*, the noun *eye*, and the affirmative *ay*.

Our *ch* he represents by *tsh*, as the French and German grammars usually do. I am convinced that this notation, except for final *ch*, is erroneous, and that the old English orthoepists, wrong in so many respects, were right when they gave *ti* or *ty* as the continental representative of the sound.

If we begin a word with *tsh*, this combination has a tendency to form a syllable by itself; thus *T-s-h-a-r-l-e-s* would naturally be not *Charles*, but *Tisharles*, a dissyllable. If I were trying to give a Frenchman an idea of our *ch* in *chair*, I should refer him to the French proper name *Thiers* (the name which so many people absurdly call *Tears*); it is not the exact equivalent of *Thiers*, but it comes very near.

The proper notation of medial *ch* may be explained by these three combinations of English words:

*hurt shoe*,

*hurt you*.

*her chew* (*chew* pronounced like first syllable of *choosing*).

I think every one will admit that the second of these combinations is nearer to the third than the first is, and that it slides into the third more readily than the first does.

Final *ch* alone is accurately represented by *tsh*.

The same observations apply *mutatis mutandis* to the notation of our *g* soft and *j*.\*

Some of Mr. Ellis' foreign transliterations, as hinted in the palaeotypic scheme and expanded in the body of the book, strike me as very odd. He considers French *é* the representative of our *z*, and would transliterate *pity* in French by *pété*. One is curious to know how he would transliterate *petty*. I have already expressed my conviction (founded on a ten years' residence in Paris,) that our *ě* is the proper representative of the French *é* and its equivalent (in most positions) *ai*. Thus the French word for wing (*aile*) is virtually our letter *l*.

He says that the Spanish guttural *x*, or in modern orthography *j*, becomes *ch* (that is our *sh*) in French. Evidently Mr. Ellis never drank a *Kéres Koblère* in Paris. The *jota* becomes *k* in French; comparative philology supplies many analogies to this change.

In Italian he has actually transposed the *o aperto*, and *o chiuso* making the former *o* and the latter *au*. He also supposes the Italian *eu* to be a diphthong like the Spanish *eu*, forgetting that there are no diphthongs in Italian and that *Europa* is as much a quadrisyllable as *paura* is a trisyllable.†

\* These views called forth, as I had anticipated, strong opposition. Professor Schlegel went so far as to deny *any resemblance* between the initial *ti* of the word *tiens* and our initial *ch*, even after I had shown him in Mr. Van Name's paper on the Creole Dialects that some of the West-Indian negroes had made out of *tiens* *bon* a verb *chamber* or *chomber* "to hold."

Mr. Ellis himself, while maintaining that the two sounds are "quite distinct," admits that the passage from one to the other is "very short and swift" (p. 205).

Practically, I put the case thus: When a given sound does not regularly exist in a language, but may be approximately expressed by two combinations of letters, one unfamiliar, the other familiar, by which should we transliterate it? And I answer without hesitation, the latter. Even when the letter power exists but is not common in the connection, I prefer to use a more familiar combination, e. g. to transliterate *keg* in French by *quêgue*.

† If any exception to this rule can be found, it is *oi* which sometimes comes very near to our own *oi* (and in the most common words, such as *voi*) much nearer indeed than Mr. Ellis would probably admit.



The awful Dutch guttural *sch* he admits as a soft sound, on Dutch authority (one would suppose the Dutch easily pleased in the matter of soft sounds,) apparently because in some dialects it is pronounced like *shr*.

If I am blamed for dwelling so long on this introductory subject of letter-notation, I can only reply that the palaeotype is a main thread of the work, running all through it, and constantly attracting attention, and I shall therefore take the liberty of going on still further in the same direction, and noting certain points where Mr. Ellis is in the main right, but not so clear or full as he might be, and where his observations suggest additional remarks.

In reference to the peculiar Welsh *ll*, he says that it is not the least like *thl* or *shl*, which sound all Englishmen give it. He is right in saying all Englishmen, for though Shakespeare wrote *Fluellen* for *Llewellyn*, the *th* and *f* are so closely connected, that Shakespeare's orthography cannot be justly considered an exception. *How* all Englishmen come to make this mistake he does not attempt to show, nor is his explanation of the true sound as intelligible as it is elaborate. It seems to be *tl* preceded by a click or cluck, which modification must be sometimes inaudible, since (as he tells us) the word *llan*, when shouted from a distance, sounds like *tlan*.

The French *ll mouillé* (*ll* preceded by *i*) is merely a long *i* or *y*. Whatever may have been the case once, there is now no sound of *l* remaining in it. This, Mr. Ellis admits in the third volume, though he does not always write in the other volumes as if he were quite sure of it. If any one doubts the fact he may be convinced by these two circumstances, that French comic writers use the *ll mouillé* to express an exaggerated and affected pronunciation of *i*, *e*, *g*, *patrille* for *patrie*; secondly, that half educated persons frequently substitute it for *y* in writing; thus a porter will spell the participle of *avoir*, *aillant* instead of *ayant*.

The Spanish liquid *ll* seems to be in a transition state. When medial, as in *Caballo*, the *l* is certainly sounded; when initial, as in *llamar* it is frequently dropped. The Italian *gl* always, I believe, in good Italian, preserves the *l*.

I will conclude my remarks on this part of the subject with some observations on the Spanish *d*. Mr. Ellis, on the authority of some recent Spanish grammarians, gives to this letter, whether initial, medial, or final, the sound of *th* flat. His example is *deidad*, pronounced *dheidhadh*. The old grammars (I mean those in vogue forty years ago) give three different sounds to the Spanish *d*, according as it is, first, initial or following a consonant; secondly, medial after a vowel; thirdly, final. In the first case the pronunciation is the same as that of the English letter, in the second our *th* flat, in the third our *th* sharp. So that each *d* in *deidad* (*deidhath*) would have a different sound. Now which of these rules is right, or are they both right according to their respective dates, and has the Spanish language undergone what we may call a certain amount of orthoepic degradation during the present century? The result of my inquiries surprised me, and will probably surprise some of my hearers. On the one hand I have not been able to satisfy myself that initial Spanish *d* is anywhere pronounced differently from our own *d*, or that final Spanish *d* ever has the sound of *th* flat, so that the old grammars may be considered more trustworthy, so far, than Mr. Ellis' more recent Spanish authority.\* But on the other hand I discovered startling traces of orthoepic degradation. That the lower classes in South America drop the final *d* and slur over the medial, so as almost or quite to elide it, need not surprise us any more than their pronunciation of *z* and *c* soft as *s*, or the apparent negroism prevalent in Cuba, of substituting a vocalized *r* for the strongly trilled final *r*, e. g. *amaw* (or something very like it) for *amar*. But I was greatly astonished to find the same elisions and others equally marked, in the Spanish capital. My son who has just returned from Madrid, where he spent several months (having passed the early winter in other parts of Spain,) tells me that persons of the best society drop the final and eliminate the medial *d*. No one but a foreigner says *usteth*, the natives all say

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\* Is it the most recent? He relies on Cube y Soler, 1851. I have seen guides published within the last ten years which insist on the pronunciation of the *d* everywhere like English *d*. But this, even if theoretically right must be practically wrong. *Vide infra*.

*usté*. But what more surprised me was a slurring of medial *r*, the very thing which is the usual reproach against Anglo-Saxons in speaking the Romance tongues. And I was even still more struck with the elision of medial *s* before a consonant, especially before *t*, precisely similar to what has happened in French. The fashionable pronunciation of Madrid seemed to my son studiously effeminate, a deliberate weakening or dropping of the strong consonants. Mr. Hay, the well-known author, tells me that the Castilians drop the final *s* of their particles, e. g. for *greater* they say, not *mas grande*, but *ma grande*. He was almost certain that he had heard the orator Castelar say *lo reyes* for *los reyes*.\* In the observations of these two gentlemen, who though liberally educated, and good practical modern linguists, are not professional philologists or even, strictly speaking, scholars, we cannot look for scientific accuracy, and must expect some discrepancies. Thus, my son thought that the apocope of *s* was confined to the lower classes, and Mr. Hay had not clearly noticed either the apocope or the syncope of *d*.

We are now at length able to proceed to the main body of the work. The general results of Mr. Ellis' elaborate investigations are, I believe, tolerably well known to scholars, and with two, or at most three exceptions, generally acquiesced in. That our

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\* Castelar is, I understand, an Andalusian, so that his pronunciation would be no more test of pure Spanish usage than Patrick Henry's would have been of pure English. In a subsequent conversation my son explained the case thus:

The Andalusian dialect tends to drop final letters, even *r*. [So that the Cuban *amaw* is not a negroism, as seemed probable.] It also drops medial *s*; e. g. *azul celeste* for *azul celeste*. This provincial pronunciation has largely invaded Madrid. The Spanish teachers say this is owing to the Cubans, who are mostly of Andalusian origin and have brought back their pronunciation to the capital. [Rather a roundabout route! but not absolutely impossible when we consider the extent of sectional feeling and consequent separation between the Spanish provinces, and the fact that Cuba is a common ground to them.]

In respect to *d*, while it is sounded clearly and like our own letter as an initial and in the *-ido* terminations, [this peculiarity Mr. Ellis has correctly noted,] it is dropped entirely from the *-ado* terminations, but without compromising the dissyllable or the separate sound of the vowels. Thus *prado* is *pra-o* (or, as Mr. Ellis would write it *pra.o*). *D* medial before *r* is *th* flat (*dh*); thus the *d* of *podrir* is the *d* of the Irishman's dress. But some exquisites drop even this *d*, and say *Mari* for *Madrid*! This pronunciation, however, is generally condemned and ridiculed as an affectation.

peculiar vowel powers are of modern date ; that our ancestors pronounced  $\bar{a}$  as alpha, (which of the modifications of alpha is a question of secondary importance,)  $\bar{e}$  as  $\bar{a}$ ,  $\bar{i}$  as *ee*, *ea* as  $\bar{a}$ , *ou* as *oo*, and *oi* or *oy* as *oo ee*, — these points may be considered pretty well established. There is some doubt as to the date of the change from alpha to English  $\bar{a}$ . Mr. Ellis considers it not yet to have taken place in Shakespeare's time ; others are of opinion (basing their conclusion partly on the same data,) that it had then taken place, or at any rate that the vowel was then in a transition state. As to the early pronunciation of *ai* diphthong, the difference of opinion is strongly marked. Mr. Ellis considered it to have been what for practical purposes we may call our  $\bar{i}$ . Mr. Payne, no mean authority on such matters, attributes to the early diphthong its present sound. The French diphthong naturally follows the English, as they rhyme in early verse, macaronic or other. Mr. Ellis, with most laudable fairness and accuracy, has quoted Mr. Payne's *ipsissima verba* at full length, so that the reader may compare both their views at leisure. Every reader must make his choice. I incline to Mr. Payne. Some of the instances not adduced by him, and on which Mr. Ellis dwells rather strongly, seem to me to confirm the views of the former gentleman rather than of the latter ; *e. g.* the remarkable political macaronics in the Auchinlech MS. To show how obvious the medial rhyme is, I will read eight lines of it. [We must remark beforehand : 1st, that *len* in the first line is for *l'on*, and the verbs *fere* and *defere* are spelled with an *e*, not with *ai* diphthong ; 2d, that the present French nasals were much weaker then, or hardly existed, so that we must rhyme French and English *ent* ; 3d, that *crey* in the 5th line is for *crois* ; 4th, that our  $\bar{i}$  was then *ee*, so that *fire* was *feer*, and *shire* (as it still is to some extent in England,) *sheer*.]

“ Len peut fere et defere, ceo fait il trop souent,  
 It nis nouper wel ne faire, perfore Engeland is shent.  
 Nostre prince d' Engleterre par le consail de sa gent,  
 At Westminster after pe feire maden a gret parlement.

La chartre fet de cyre ieo lenteink et bien le crey  
It was holde to neih þe fire and is molten al away.  
Ore ne say mes que dire, tout i va a Tripolay,  
Hundred, chapitle, court an shire, all hit goþ a deuel wey."

These alternate French and English lines seem on the face of them to rhyme in their quatrains or double-pairs not only finally but medially; to pronounce with Mr. Ellis "it nis nouthur wel ne fire" in the second line, breaks up the rhyme.\* I think also that Mr. Ellis' explanation of the connection between the diphthongs *ai* and *oi* in French (given it is true in another writing, but not contradicted in this book, and about which we shall have more to say,) tells against him here. Mr. Payne considers that in Norman and Early English, *ai*, *ay*, *ei*, *ey*, and even their reversed forms, *ia*, *ie*, had the sound of *ā*, as well as *ea* and *ae*; in short he holds to what we may call an etacism in old French.†

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\* The rhyme "lasteth ay," "miserere mei" (Ellis, p. 447), I take to be a make-shift rhyme of a monosyllable with a dissyllable, such as *share* and *layer* would be now.

† The sound of *é* and its general equivalent *ai* diphthong in modern French I presume to be of late introduction; and this is apparently assumed by both disputants.

If we can trust De Saint Lien — who styled himself *Gentilhomme Bourbonnais*, Anglicised his name into *Holyband* and published *The French Littleton* in 1609,— the diphthong must then have been in the transition state. He gives no fewer than three different sounds to *ai* or *ay*. First, that of *é* in the final syllable of the future indicative, in *ay* (present of *avoir*) and *sçais* (present of *savoir*). Secondly, "the first person of the first perfect [what is now usually called the preterit definite] is sounded as it is written." Whatever this may mean, the distinction is really curious. It is intelligible enough that *aimerais* (conditional) = *aimerè*, while *aimerai* (future) = *aimeré*; but on what principle could the final syllables of the preterit and the future (*aimai*, *aimerai*,) be differently pronounced? Thirdly, in all other cases, "sound it as *gaye* [gay] *gaping*," that is evidently our *ā*.

A writer in *The Academy* has pointed out the etymological difference of *é* and *è*, the latter representing a Latin *ā* while the former represents a Latin *e*. But his inference that these two *e*'s have exchanged their original sounds is very questionable. I cannot bring myself to believe that *mère*, *père* were ever pronounced like the first syllables of *Méry*, *périr*, or of our own *merry*, *perry*.

There is another point connected with the English diphthong *ai* which ought not to be passed over; so I shall introduce it here, though it comes in somewhat clumsily. The old standard dictionaries (Walker, &c.) give five sounds of English *a*, the four which are familiar and obvious, and a fifth, "the sound of *ai* in *fair*." No difference exists at present between *fare* and *fair* in the pronunciation of Englishmen or Americans, and this fifth sound of *a* is either an anachronism or a mere fantasy. Which is it? When I ventilated this question twenty years ago, Professor Halde-  
man threw out a suggestion that the English of the last century gave a French sound

But the most disputed of Mr. Ellis' points is the French sound of *u*, which is attributed to our *u*, both long and short, until after Shakespeare's time. If he is correct, the change that has occurred is most extraordinary; the French *u* is now not only so foreign to the Anglo-Saxons that they cannot (without much effort and instruction and practice) pronounce it, but they have not a conception of what it is like; and at this day there are dozens of poetasters in this country, and not a few in the mother country who imagine (judging from their practice) that French words like *perdu* and *plus* rhyme with English words like *you* and *through*; they might almost as well rhyme them to *bee* and *flee*. Mr. Ellis, however, would say that this assertion is too broad, the sound *does* exist in Anglo-Saxendom, to wit, in Scotland and in some of the English counties. I am by no means sure that this Low-

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to *ai*, pronouncing *fair*, for instance, like the first syllable of *ferry*. I am not aware of his reasons for this hypothesis, nor can I find any direct reference to such a pronunciation in Mr. Ellis; but there is a circumstance which bears on this point indirectly though it can hardly be said to confirm Prof. Haldeman's view. In the last century *cheerful* and *chair full* were sufficiently alike in sound to give rise to a bad conundrum noticed by Mr. Ellis "Why is a fat man a merry man?" "Because he is a cheer-ful." Now our first impulse is to refer this to the pronunciation of *chair* as *cheer*, which we know was then current to some extent in England, as indeed it is to this day in South Carolina and possibly in some other Southern States. I am unable to satisfy myself how far this pronunciation extended, whether it included all words in which *ai* is followed by *r*, whether it included any in which *ai* is not followed by *r*, but there are indications in the literature of the day that so far as it did prevail, it was the result of a reaction against a Hibernian attempt to revise the archaism of *ā* for *ea* diphthong, which is a well-known Hibernicism to the present day. But another mode of explaining the conundrum occurs to me. The pronunciation *cherful* was known in 1780 and is still known in England, and indeed is conformable to the analogy and genius of the language, which shortens in compounds the long vowel of the simple, *know*, *knowledge*; *vine*, *vinyard*; *Whitby* from *white*, and even *Whitsunday* from *white* — if that be the true derivation of the word which, however, is doubtful. Now we know that final *r* in English is utterly destructive of the sound of *ē* changing it into the indistinct *ū*, whether the final syllable be or be not accented. Is it not then possible that Englishmen of the last century in trying to give the *ai* some such [theoretical] sound as Prof. Haldeman supposes, may have run it into *ū*. It is entirely odd to suppose our great grandfathers talking of a *fur* day and sitting on a *chur*; yet it is equally strange to suppose them sitting on a *cherr* in a *ferr* day; and if we reject both these, I see no third alternative except to pronounce this fifth sound of *a* altogether imaginary, and the old lexicographers under a delusion when they invented it.

land Scotch *ui* is the French *u*; but allowing it to be identical, I do not admit the inference; for the Lowland Scotch was a very peculiar dialect of English, resembling, indeed, that of the border counties, but very distinct from the midland and Southern varieties. As to the Devon, Mr. Ellis confesses (note on pp. 635-6, chap. vii) that the sound in this dialect is vague and indeterminate, sometimes verging on *oo*, more frequently on his *oe oe*, that is the French *eu* long as in *jeûne* "fasting," or the long sound of that indistinct vowel which we usually consider as *ũ*.\* The evidence of the 16th and 17th century orthoepists is very conflicting, as we might expect, considering the frequent confusions and errors which occur in our so much more enlightened days. It is certainly annoying and perplexing to find two men of the same locality, education and social position, contradicting each other point blank, as in the case of Wallis and Wilkins. The critic of the *North American* thinks that in such a strait we should prefer the writer who states that a foreign sound is strange and difficult to his own people; but it would hardly be safe to adopt this rule broadly and without limitation. However, the very utmost weight which we can assign to Bullokar, Wallis, and the others who identified the sound of *u* in French and English, is to let them offset the contrary statements of Wilkins, Erondele, and the others who discriminate between the sounds. We are then thrown back upon the general probabilities of the case, and these are surely in favor of the present sound. For my own part, I doubt very much if the French *u* was ever fairly naturalized in England, even in the French speech of the upper classes. We all remember how Chaucer describes his prioress as speaking French

"ful faire and fetisly

After the scole of Stratford at the Bowe

For French of Paris was to hire unknowe,"—

showing that in his time there was a French French, and an English French. The French *u* is and always was a strange sound to the Spaniard, the Italian, the Portuguese, the Dutch-

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\* It would be well to obtain the opinion of some French orthoepists as to the identity or non-identity of these Scotch and provincial sounds with the French *u*.

man, yes, and we may add the German, in spite of the theoretical and grammar-inculcated correspondence of the German *ue* diphthong with the French vowel.

There are three passages in Mr. Ellis' work which have particularly attracted my attention.

1st, As to the numeral *one*. It doubtless surprised most of us when our attention was first called to the fact that the digammatic prefix to this word is of comparatively recent date. Mr. Ellis is unable to fix the exact time of its introduction, but it was not before the 17th century. I have a conjecture (I do not pretend to call it anything more) that while passing from *own* into *wun*, the word took the intermediate form, *un*. Let us examine what may be called a crucial passage in *Love's Labor Lost*: "Master Person, quasi perse-on, and if one should be perst, which is the one?" with our modern pronunciation this is unintelligible, except the vulgarism of *perse* for *pierce*, still common in some parts of America. Mr. Ellis pronounces: "If own should be pirst which is the own?" But suppose we throw out the words "is the" and read, "If un should be pirst which un?" then the clause becomes modern rustic English, for English rustics say *un* for *one* to this day.\*

2d. As to the English prosthesis and aphæresis of the letter *h*. He begins by speaking of the words in which initial *h* is properly mute. These he reduces to five, *heir*, *honest*, *honor*, *hostler*, *hour* (and of course their derivatives). *Humble* and *humor* he leaves doubtful. This may surprise some of us. I believe no Americans say *humble*, and very few say *humor*. We do not suppose it good English to say so. Dickens evidently sounded the *h* of *humble*, (see *Uriah Heep* in *David Copperfield*,) but Dickens, after all, was not a man of the highest education. It is certainly singular to find an American aphaeresis contrasted with an English *quasi*-prosthesis. I must say that on this point my own recollections do not agree with Mr. Ellis' experience.

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\* They also use it for *it*, *him*, *them* — a sort of indefinite pronoun like French *on*, but only in the objective case.

My conjecture on the intermediate stage of *un* may perhaps be confirmed or refuted by reference to the rhymes of the period.



The main question, however, relates to the English actual prosthesis, or prefix of the *h* where it is not written, conjointly with the equally common aphæresis. Respecting these peculiarities, the popular American conception is erroneous. There is a current idea (made the most of by would-be dramatists and comic writers) that all Englishmen except those of the very highest class (and even many of those) always prefix an initial *h*, where there is none, and omit it where it is written; and that the same persons are guilty of both the prosthesis and the aphæresis. This is a grave error. The result of my own experience and observation I sum up thus: In London, no man above the rank of a servant or a small tradesman says *a hass* or *a hangel*. Thackeray and Trollope may be quoted against this assertion. But I do not put implicit faith in novelists as philological authorities, and though Thackeray is sometimes very happy in transliteration, he is not uniformly so, e. g., when he writes *cage* instead of *cadge* to express *carriage* in the flunkey dialect. Let us, however, to avoid appearance of hair-splitting, draw the line a little higher, so as to include the upper order of tradesmen; *there* the prosthesis must stop. But the aphæresis extends much higher. Gentlemen in the best society sometimes talk of *'ouse* and *'ome*: they are not conscious of saying so, any more than a Massachusetts gentleman is conscious of calling a certain familiar article of dress his *cot* or his *caught* instead of his *coat*. But when we go into the western and northwestern counties, and what we may broadly call the manufacturing districts, the prosthesis extends much higher up into society. It is common in what the English call the upper-middle classes, and among men whom we should call merchants. The aphæresis, on the other hand, is not so common there, in the best society, though on this point I feel less certainty. The difference is conformable to what we might expect; as we go northward the aspirate becomes more prevalent, and (so to speak) more respectable. Perhaps my conclusion is an imperfect generalization, but Mr. Ellis bears me out in the first part of it, at least. He says, (chap. iii., p. 221,) "In the practice even of the most esteemed speakers, *ham* in names of places has no aspirate, *ex-*

*hibit, exhibition*, lose *h*, and *his, him, her*, when unaccented drop their *h*. It is extremely common in London to say *ă tome* for *at home*.”\* The general impression given by his remarks (which are not so full or clear as could be wished) is that the prosthesis denotes a lower grade of society than the aphæresis. At any rate it is certainly wrong to assign both, indiscriminately, to all or nearly all Englishmen, as the average American is apt to do.

The entire absence of this erroneous aphæresis and prosthesis of *h* from all varieties of American dialect has often struck English tourists. There is, however, one Americanism—though not solely an Americanism—connected with *h*. It is the aspiration of the initial *wh*. Good English practice entirely omits the *h* here, making, for instance, no distinction between the noun *witch* and the relative *which*. The only Londoner (if, indeed, he could properly be called such) whom I ever heard aspirate the initial *wh* was Prof. John Grote. To aspirate the *wh* is Scotch, Irish, American. Thackeray, to express it in the speech of his O’Mulligans and Costigans, reverses the letters, writing *hwat* for *what*. It is probable, however, that the north-county men, who have some of the Scotch peculiarities, aspirate the initial *wh*, though I cannot recollect any of my acquaintances who did, *e. g.* Tom Taylor, who is a Cumberland man, certainly did not.

Before taking leave of the letter *h*, let us say something about it in its opposite position—at the end of a word. Mr. Ellis shows how in Shakespeare’s time the final *h* after *o* had the same diacritic power as final *e* mute; the name written *moth* in *Love’s Labor Lost* was pronounced *mote*; the page is not called *moth* as a fluttering filbertigibbet lad, but *mote* as a mere speck or mite of a boy. Mr. Grant White wished to improve on this, and give the same power to medial *h*, which seems to be an error. The mediæval Latin orthographies show that this diacritic power of final *h* was once very general. It is still retained in German. The most natural way to a German of expressing the sounds *āte, ōte*, is *eth, oth*. An English acquaintance of mine, named Mate, who had reported

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\* His paleotype is perhaps *ă tome*. I am not sure of it.

himself *viva voce* to his landlord at Baden, was much disgusted at appearing next day in the watering-place gazette as Mr. *Meth*.

3d. As to the diphthong *oi*, the different powers and changes of this diphthong in different languages, were discussed by Mr. Ellis, in a paper read before the Philological Society, in 1868, of which paper a portion only is embodied in the present work. (I may be allowed to mention here as an illustration of the difficulties with which the American student has to contend, that after failing to find this volume of the Society's transactions in the public libraries of more than one city, and equally failing to find any bookseller who would undertake to import it for me, I was compelled to write to the author himself.)

In a paper which I had the honor to present at the first meeting of this association, I suggested that the first element of the Greek diphthong *oi* may originally have had a digammatic power, *which was afterwards lost*. This is Mr. Ellis' view. There is a continental theory—I am unable to say who first put it into shape; it may be found in the transactions of our Oriental Society—which bears on this question. The theory is as follows: the diphthongs *ai oi* differ from the other diphthongs in being more simple sounds, and in having some of the qualities of short vowels, *e. g.* when final they throw back the accent to the ante-penult. *ai* is the equivalent of *ε*, (just as *ai* in French is of *é*) and *oi* of *υ*. The epithet *ψιλλόν* applied to the two vowels does not mean, as generally supposed, *smooth, unaspirated*, (which indeed involves a contradiction when applied to *υ*;) it means *simple*, as opposed to the compound or diphthongal equivalent. This hypothesis is at least ingenious. It must assume, however, the non-existence of any digammatic element in *oi*, or at any rate, its disappearance before the names *Epsilon*, *Upsilon*, were given to those letters.\*

The connection of *o* with *ov*, in the apparent relation of short and long, which Mr. Ellis insists on, may help to prove that

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\* We must remember also that *omega* in certain cases throws back the accent to the ante-penult.

*o* and *ω* were different vowel powers; I do not think it necessary as a support to the existence (at some time) of a digammatic element in *ou*.

The Roman *œ* certainly looks like an equivalent of the Greek *oi* and partly invented for that purpose. But there is a very prevalent opinion among scholars that it was only a conventional representative, not an equivalent, and that it had the sound of English *ā*. This conclusion they draw, not merely that *oe* has become *e* in the Romance languages (for *that* only from the fact proves that the diphthong had this sound in later Latin, which no one ever doubted,) but also from the occasional interchange of *ae* and *oe* in Latin, even in words like *coelum* which are at least cognate to the Greek.\* They are not, however, agreed among themselves as to details, and especially as to the explanation of pairs like *moenia*, *munia*, *poena*, *punire*. Some, (our friend, Prof. Hadley, is of the number) do not admit that *oe* ever had any sound but [Engl.] *ā*. Some, like Corssen, allow an original sound which had something of *u* in it.† Some think that the *o* was at first digammatic. Among these last is Mr. Ellis, who holds that as *oi* was originally [Engl.] *wee*, so *oe* was originally [Engl.] *wā*.‡ This is certainly an easier way of accounting§ for the above mentioned pairs, than to suppose that the Romans were at first undecided whether to express *oi* by the vowel *u* or their new diphthong *oe*, and so split the difference by taking *u* as its representative in some words and *oe* in others. It also explains the later sound of *oe* as simple *e* by the dropping of the prefix. But the whole subject is involved in difficulty, as I have shown in the paper already referred to, where I really understated the case by omitting to take account of this very difference be-

\* Mr. H. A. J. Munro, however, condemns *coelum* as a late coinage like *sylva*.

† This was Corssen's *first* opinion. He afterwards came to the conclusion that the old Roman *oi* split into *æ* and *u* according as the second or first element of the diphthong prevailed in popular pronunciation. He also rejects the *close* connection of the Greek diphthong with the Latin *vi* of words like *vinum*.

‡ Written in paleotype, *ui ue*. Perhaps Mr. Ellis would hardly allow his *u* to be digammatic, but it comes to this practically, if the combinations are to be considered diphthongs at all.

§ By the singular but not impossible absorption of the *second* element.

tween the Greek diphthong and its Roman representative, which is, perhaps, the most puzzling of our confusions. I must confess that I cannot see my way clearly through it. At an earlier period, when the two languages were farther removed, the Romans seem to have had no difficulty in expressing the *oi* by *vi*—doubtless pronounced *wee*. At a later period, the sound of the *oi* is so strange to them that they are obliged to make a diphthong partly on purpose to represent it—and after all, the representation is only conventional; the foreign sound is not correctly rendered. If *oe* was merely [Engl.] *ā*, what was the use of inventing it when they already had *e* and *ae* with the same sound?

Two possibilities suggest themselves:

The first is, a variation of the Roman *e* towards *i*, of which there are some apparent signs; but the absence of anything like Iotacism in the Romance tongues seems to negative this supposition at once. I therefore dismiss it, though somewhat unwillingly.

The other is as follows: We may suppose, that whatever the original sound of the second element in *oi*, and whether it ever had, or, having had, still retained a digammatic prefix, it had come to be no longer a pure *ee* but contained some admixture of *u*. (A digammatic prefix might well pass into such a shade of *u*.) Then the sound would be foreign and difficult to the Romans, who seem not to have had any false sounds in their language, and were greatly puzzled by the *u*. Although they made a special sign for the Greek diphthong, their clumsy attempts at pronouncing it might soon degenerate into simple [Engl.] *ā*. Much as the Germans, though they have made *their* *oe* a conventional representative of the French *eu* and *œu*, stumble fearfully at these French sounds, generally rendering them by *e*, sometimes even by Alpha. A German *valet de place*, at Munich, once told me that Lola Montes *had* *marshes* (*avait des marais*) in a certain street, meaning that she had lived (*avait demeuré*) in it.

Professor Drisler's opinion is somewhat peculiar: He thinks that in the pairs like *poena*, *punire*, the *u* represents the *oe*, not by substitution or omission, but by simple contraction, *oe* becoming *u*, just as in Greek *oe* becomes *ou*.

On the whole, I must reiterate my inability to arrive at any satisfactory solution of all our difficulties. The only two positive conclusions at which I have succeeded in arriving are both negative (pardon the Hibernicism;) I am confident that the classical sound of *oi* was not, as in modern Greek, a simple *i* (Engl. *ee*,) and that the *first* sound of *oe* was not as in later Latin a simple *e*.

We now pass to the diphthong in French. The interchange of *oi* with *ai* in certain proper nouns and adjectives (as *Français*, *français*, or *François français*; *aimais*, *aimait*, or *aimois*, *aimoit*) up to a comparatively recent date\* is a puzzle at first sight, for there seems little connection between the sounds. Mr. Ellis considers that the second element of the diphthong was originally a French *e*, and that *oi* thus passed into *ai* by dropping what I should call the digammatic element, thus *Françwais*, *Français*. This explanation is plausible and probable. *Moé*, *toé*, (that is in English letters nearly *mweh*, *tweh*), have always been provincialisms for *moi*, *toi*. The Norman use of *ai* (or its equivalents) for *oi* is of ancient date. At one time the sound of *ai* had encroached largely on *oi*. *Sait* for *soit* and *fraid* for *froid* were good seventeenth-century French (p. 134). One of the curiosities of the confusion is that the names of the French letters, afterwards *bé*, *cé*, *dé*, &c., and now *be*, *ce*, *de*, were, in the sixteenth century, *boy*, *çoy*, *doy*, &c.

The present sound of the diphthong, Mr. Ellis considers to be *waa* rather than *waw*. He has abundant French authority for this; yet I have heard the latter in Paris at least as often as the former. It is safest to consider the pronunciation as fluctuating between the two sounds, much as the *English* pronunciation of *vase* fluctuates between *vaaz* and *vauz*.†

We finally arrive at English. Mr. Ellis has shown pretty conclusively that the original English pronunciation of *oi* was

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\* There is at least one living writer, Couture, the painter, who still uses *oi* for *ai* in his verbs.

† I believe all Americans pronounce *vase* to rhyme with *case*. Moore (an Irishman) rhymes it with *grace*, habitually. Sotheby (an Englishman) rhymes it with *draws*.

[Engl.] *ooee*. Our ancestors pronounced *boy* as an American pronounces "buoy," *booe*. (In regard to this word *buoy* I had always supposed our pronunciation a pure Americanism, but Mr. Ellis says that it is also that of all nautical men in England. In ordinary English society the word is pronounced exactly like *boy*.)

In its passage to the present sound, the diphthong (in the 17th century) came near taking that of *ī*; but this pronunciation was condemned, and has passed into a vulgarism and a Hibernicism. It is curious to note, as showing how completely such things are matters of fashion and convention, that exactly the reverse has happened in German with the *eu*, the pronunciation of which as *oi*, though theoretically correct, is practically considered vulgar.

I am inclined to dwell somewhat on this interchange of *oi* and *ī*, because it seems to me to afford additional proof of Mr. Ellis' error in considering the first element of these diphthongs to be the indistinct *ǔ*, rather than alpha in one and [Engl.] *au* in the other. As alpha broadens into *au*, so *i* broadens into *oi*; the change is clearly accounted for. According to Mr. Ellis' notation, it is less easy to understand or explain.

Mr. Ellis considers that our *oi* is a peculiar sound, not existing in the other European languages. *Sed quaere*.

Loose and desultory as these remarks on the diphthong *oi* and its representatives may seem, there is, I think, a leading idea to be gathered from them, whether we consider the first element as *ō*, [Engl.] *oo*, or [Engl.] *au*, the second as *i* [*ee*] or *e* [*ā*], there appears in the four languages which we examined a certain similarity of progress; the first element has originally a digammatic force; this digamma afterwards disappears, and the second element is modified. We cannot be so sure of this in Latin as in the other languages, but even there, we have at least a probability. In French the digamma still remains except in the few proper nouns, adjectives, and inflections, where *oi* has given way to *ai*.

I have already trespassed too long on your patience, but it is hard to part from Mr. Ellis without taking some notice of his labors and arguments in favor of orthographic reform.

Most of the recommenders of phonetic systems have been met with ridicule, and it is not unjust to add that many of them have deserved nothing better. Ignorance, indolence, love of notoriety, that blind radicalism which, with about as much wit as a mischievous monkey, attacks whatever *is*, merely *because* it is,—such are the inspirations of the majority of them. Some are so ignorant of Greek as to call themselves *phonic* which, if it meant anything would mean *murderous*—and they certainly *do* murder common sense and logic; some so ignorant of English that they do not know by what rule or on what principle the *a* of *mate* is long. From such persons Mr. Ellis is removed *toto coelo*. He is a man of wide and deep knowledge, a scholar, a mathematician (sixth wrangler at Cambridge,) apparently a musician; he has labored many years at his particular specialty, and his very mistakes are such as no ignorant man could make. Whatever he says should receive the most respectful consideration. He sees the great inconveniences and practical absurdities of the present system (all of which are exaggerated here), particularly the subordination of authors to printers. If an Englishman feels this, how much more must an American, above all a New Yorker, in the majority of the printing-houses of whose city the Websterian cacography reigns supreme. All the faults of the existing orthography are set forth well and truly and without exaggeration. But Mr. Ellis soon makes an admission which is indirectly fatal to the proposed reform. He says (Chap. vi., pp. 624, *sqq.*), that there can be no absolute standard of pronunciation, and this position he illustrates at length. I was able to add another illustration within fifteen minutes of reading the chapter. After giving the last-century pronunciation of *sewer* (drain) which was *shore*, he expresses the present sound by a monosyllable which most persons would be apt to pronounce like *sure*. I had scarcely read this when there called on me two English gentlemen of about the same age, education, social and official position. “How do you pronounce this word?” I asked. The reply of one was a monosyllable very like Mr. Ellis’, the reply of the other a disyllable very like the pronunciation of most Americans. Sev-



eral of Mr. Ellis' own pronunciations would not find universal acceptance. As an orthoepist, he sees the great advantage which a scientifically-framed phonetic system would have in giving the pronunciation of each writer. We might almost be able to get at the statistics of dialectic peculiarities and to tell how many Massachusetts men call a coat a *cot*, and how many call it a *caught*. But we must remember that it is not the sole use of written language to inform the people of one section or country how the people of another section or country pronounce. By giving all local and even individual peculiarities a species of legitimate sanction in serious writing, we debase the standard of pronunciation still more, while we break up the standard of orthography altogether. The attempt to create a perfect system of spelling would inevitably end in the confusion and destruction of all system. When Mr. Ellis, and some fellow-reformers, started a newspaper on the improved plan, they came to grief on the very title. It was *Phonetic News*; some pronounced the second word *nooz*, others *nyooz*; of course each pronunciation required a different notation. This anecdote, reported in perfect good faith by the author, strikes me as an excellent practical *reductio ad absurdum*.

If I have spoken freely of many passages and statements in this book, it is not from want of admiration for the work, which is a monument, not only of industrious, but of intelligent learning, a treatise of exceeding interest and value. I am sure we all deeply regret that the author's impaired health has delayed the completion of it by the appearance of the last volume.